

**Written Comments for the Early Childhood Learning and Listening Tour, April 23, 2010, Washington DC,  
Dept of Education Building, 400 Maryland Ave, SW**

Hello. I am Mary Rivkin, Associate Professor of Education at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

My subject is Outdoor Experiences for Young Children as they are an essential part of early education, which must be included when we talk about P-3 structures. The physical site of education is important.

Early childhood education has always included nature. Friedrich Froebel called his school “Kindergarten”—garden of children, expressing the concept that children are like flowers, growing and unfolding as they develop. We now speak of their genetic and epigenetic potential, realizing that the environment for development is critical.

Research shows that outdoor play provides many benefits for children. Wellness is enhanced through increased activity and in schools with gardens fresh, wholesome food. The real nature of the outdoors gives children experiential grounding in weather, soil, rocks, plants, insects and other animals, clouds; all the early childhood curriculum is supported by outdoor experiences. In addition, recent research indicates that emotional benefits flow from being in nature—less attention deficit disorder, less aggression, more sense of connectedness. In our concern about climate change, it is possible that learning about and bonding with nature—environmental stewardship—is an essential value to be taught in early childhood education.

John Dewey, another inspiration of our field, assumed a natural environment for his school—a context of gardens, field and farmland. This context no longer universal for children yet it is as important now as then and earlier for Froebel.

The revised ESEA will likely have a section on outdoor access for children. Previously introduced in Congress, the No Child Left Inside bill, included in ESEA will strengthen our efforts to provide learning environments beyond the classroom and school building.

Thank you. And thanks to Joan Lombardi and Jacqueline Jones, and HHS and DOE, for leading this effort to engage the public in this national conversation about early learning.

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**Comments for:**  
**Early Learning Listening Tour – Understanding P-3 Structures**  
**Submitted to the U.S. Departments of Education and Health & Human Services**  
**April 23, 2010**  
**Clinton Macsherry**

There can no longer be any doubt that one of the greatest influences on educational achievement, workforce quality, and community prosperity is the quality of children's experiences before they enter kindergarten. And yet, despite overwhelming evidence of the human and fiscal benefits of high-quality early education, our nation has failed to make necessary and sufficient investments in young children, to their profound detriment and at great cost to society as a whole. Parents, educators, advocates, and others can and should take encouragement from the Obama Administration's oft-stated goal of enhancing quality and access to early childhood education. Clearly the time to put promise into practice has arrived.

Since 1945, Maryland Family Network has been the leading advocate for public policies that benefit Maryland's young children and families. Our mission is to ensure that they have the resources to learn and succeed. We appreciate this opportunity to offer comments to the Administration's Early Learning Listening Team.

Maryland is unique among the states in that it conducts an annual assessment of school readiness for all incoming public kindergartners. Data has been collected and analyzed since the 2001-2002 school year. The Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) Kindergarten Assessment uses 30 indicators from the Work Sampling System across seven domains of learning. The assessments are performed during the first two weeks in November, and the information is used by teachers for instructional purposes throughout the kindergarten year. The data is also reported to the Maryland State Department of Education, which analyzes it within the context of school readiness skills. The results can be disaggregated in a multitude of ways—to show readiness based on local jurisdiction, on ethnicity, and/or on prior care setting, to cite a few of the most simple examples. (See [http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child\\_care/early\\_learning/](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/early_learning/) -- click on "MMSR School Readiness PowerPoint presentation.")

One of the most remarkable findings to emerge from the MMSR Assessment points to efficacy of public pre-kindergarten in preparing children—especially children from low-income families—to succeed. In Maryland, children in families whose income falls at or below 185% of federal poverty guidelines are eligible for enrollment in public pre-K programs. After serving income-eligible children, local jurisdictions may at their discretion enroll other children with risk factors (English language learners, for example, or children with developmental delays).

And yet, despite the risks to school readiness that they have faced, children arriving at kindergarten after pre-K have consistently shown a high level of school readiness, considerably ahead of their low-income peers and other children entering school from family child care programs, Head Start, and home or informal settings. In 2008-2009, for example, 75% of pre-K alumni were assessed as fully ready, compared with only 65% of incoming kindergartners eligible for free and reduced-price meals (also pegged at 185% of poverty) and 63% of children arriving from home or informal settings.

We believe the lessons from Maryland's data and experience are compelling and deserve careful consideration as the Obama Administration reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and develops additional education policies. The chief lesson is this: if school reform, at least in part, means closing achievement gaps, then pre-K is a critical beginning to this process. To be sure, an array of important and sometimes complicated initiatives—beginning with maternal health and nutrition and carrying through the earliest months and years of life—have vital roles to play in preparing children to succeed. But expanding pre-K opportunities is a relatively simple and highly effective strategy for closing achievement gaps, and one that stands squarely on the threshold of education reform.

The expansion of pre-K need not mean enormous additional federal, state, or local expenditures for classroom construction or student transportation. Indeed, the most enlightened models of pre-K expansion make full use of existing high-quality programs in diverse settings, such as community-based child care and Head Start centers. Moreover, as longitudinal data demonstrates, pre-K can result in cost savings by decreasing grade retention and the

need for special education services as students progress through the K-12 years. Pre-K can make everything else we do to improve student achievement work better.

Maryland Family Network urges the Administration to integrate pre-K and early childhood education fully into the reauthorization of ESEA and all education policymaking. Specifically, we ask that: 1) a federal-state partnership be established to help Maryland and other states improve and expand pre-K; 2) pre-K be designated as an option for turning around low-performing schools; 3) high-quality early childhood programs be recognized as an eligible use of funds to extend learning time; and 4) incentives be introduced to encourage Title I dollars to flow more freely to early childhood and pre-K programs.

In Maryland, we are tremendously proud that our State has been ranked best in the nation for education for two consecutive years by *Education Week*. It's no secret—in fact, it's universally acknowledged—that early childhood education and high-quality pre-K form a cornerstone of Maryland's success. We know we can do better. Access to pre-K is still limited to too few of Maryland's three- and four-year-olds. But as a State and we hope as a nation, we are poised to take the next big step. To repeat: the time to put promise into practice has arrived.



Testimony for the Early Learning Listening Tour: Structure, April 23, 2010  
Louise W. Wiener, Learning and Leadership in Families, Washington, DC

### **Attendance Issues and Their Impact in Early Childhood Education**

Attendance and punctuality are uncommon topics in early childhood discussions. Yet recent national studies document that absenteeism in kindergarten and tardiness in Head Start are widespread, under-appreciated, and under-addressed related issues. Solving absenteeism has both academic and economic implications for schools. Solving absenteeism without addressing punctuality leaves disruption of teaching time in place and ignores a work habit essential throughout school and beyond. These related phenomena beg for consistency and positive change from preschool through early elementary grades.

Under the current structure, zero to five education embraces a whole child approach with a substantial emphasis on family engagement. With the notable exception of community schools, this nurturing approach to parents and families is largely dropped at the kindergarten door. In low income, high stress neighborhoods, where many of the parents have limited confidence in their own academic achievement and/or harbor negative associations with their own school years, this shift in structure and ethos can have significant negative ramifications.

Children's on-time attendance in preschool and early elementary grades is one very practical, measurable and significant markers of family engagement in early childhood education. Parents decide when and whether children arrive at preschool, kindergarten, and first grade. The ramifications for academic outcomes for children are significant.

This paper reviews research and documented experience on chronic absenteeism and punctuality in preschool and early elementary grades and argues for the collection, analysis and use of attendance and punctuality data in a manner that supports families, school climate, and academic outcomes for children from preschool through early elementary grades.

Chronic absenteeism is the tipping point when cumulative absences compromise the possibility of academic success. A 10 % absence rate is the meaningful threshold for defining chronic absenteeism in kindergarten and early elementary grades. The definition incorporates both excused and unexcused absences because the issue is the impact of missing time on task. The reason for missing time on task is a separate issue. There is no data defining what constitutes an appropriate attendance threshold within preschool and/or in infant toddler programs.

The National Center for Children in Poverty issued 2 seminal studies *A National Portrait of Absenteeism in the Early Grades* (Romero and Lee, 2007) and *Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades* (Chang and Romero, 2008) The first study analyzed data from the US Department of Education's Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (Kindergarten Cohort) and defined chronic absenteeism as missing more than 18 days per school year (10%). The studies reveal a stark picture:

10% of kindergarten children nation-wide are chronically absent.

In kindergarten, children from poor families are four times more likely to be chronic absentees than their higher income counterparts.

Among poor children, chronic absence in kindergarten predicts the lowest level of educational achievement at the end of fifth grade.

*Present, Engaged and Accounted For* reports that chronic absenteeism is lower in kindergarten among children who have attended a center-based preschool program. *Strengthening Schools by Strengthening Families*, the New School's study on absenteeism in New York City schools (2008) indicates that chronic absenteeism is at its highest in preschool and kindergarten. Though the incidence of absence subsides by second grade, the academic toll of earlier absences remains apparent. The combined results of the national and New York City studies make clear that attendance issues need to be addressed as early as preschool, and need to be consistent from preschool through the early elementary grades. There is no data on how or if attendance issues play out in zero to three programs.

A recent national survey on punctuality undertaken by Learning and Leadership in Families in partnership with the National Head Start Association offers the beginnings of a profile on attendance issues in Head Start. The survey queried

Head Start professionals using the following definitions: *Punctuality* means children arrive AT the established start time for class. *Tardiness* means children arrive LATER than the established start time for class. The survey found: 54% of teacher respondents indicate in an average week 3 to 6 different children (out of a possible maximum of 18 children) are late to class.

An additional 14% of teacher respondents indicate in an average week, more than 7 different children are late to class.

Parents are recognized as the most significant influence on children's punctuality.

Tardiness appears to have an influence on teachers' attitudes about parents.

Punctuality reflects self-discipline, self-control, and reliability: work habits, which have an academic, social and emotional impact throughout life. Tardiness is one of the most pervasive causes of job loss at the entry level. Early education can offer a family friendly environment in which to try to interrupt this cycle.

Experience from the nine sites profiled in *Present, Engaged and Accounted For* and sites in the New York City study emphasize the importance of understanding what is causing the chronic absenteeism and document that change can be affected with clear data and good planning. Each of the sites used its data in ways that reflected and supported local concerns. Some reported successful strategies are school based and focus on informing and engaging parents, heightening cultural sensitivity, and addressing classroom strategies. Other issues require networking with social services to address physical and mental health issues within families, and/or community issues, such as transportation or unsafe streets. These broader issues, though not the direct responsibility of the schools, have a profound impact on the capacity of children to get to school on time and the ability of the school to do its job of educating children.

Three steps relating to attendance are important to strengthening the structure for early education.

Tracking data child by child throughout the early education years.

Professional development for teachers and administrators to build capacity to use attendance data constructively for planning, targeting, and problem solving.

Outreach to families and community resources.

**Data Systems that track individual attendance:** The *sine qua non* of effective attendance strategies is maintaining, analyzing and strategically using individual attendance data. The collection of such information can support research and strategic planning at the district, state and national levels, and can support pragmatic early intervention at the program / school level.

**Professional development for teachers and administrators.** Recognizing chronic absenteeism and chronic tardiness as academic issues reflects a change in mindset. Professional development is necessary to rethink attendance related strategies at the school level and networking at the community level.

**Networking and Outreach to Families:** A focus on attendance and punctuality can bring issues to the school's attention that affect academic outcomes but are not academic in nature. Community schools and Head Start provide models of networking with community social services of outreach to families and networking with community resources. The policies, procedures and budgets of early education need to reflect the prominence, the need, and the benefits of early intervention by social services to academic outcomes.

An effective continuum of early childhood education services needs to address attendance issues with intentionality, with a new perspective on the use of attendance data, and with a holistic approach to education children. Together we need to consider at each stage of early childhood how parents, schools and communities can build and support practices in early childhood families that help families develop the skills, beliefs and strategies to support regular school attendance.

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April 23, 2010

The Honorable Arne Duncan  
Secretary  
U. S. Department of Education  
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The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Ave., SW  
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Dear Secretary Duncan and Secretary Sebelius:

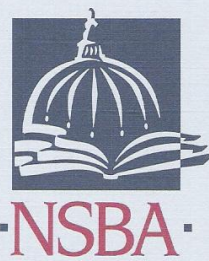
The National School Boards Association (NSBA) representing over 95,000 local school board members across the nation through our state school boards associations is pleased to submit this statement regarding early learning and understanding P – 3 structures.

NSBA applauds the substantive and sustained support by the Obama Administration for early childhood initiatives. Inter-agency collaboration between the departments of Education, Health & Human Services, and Agriculture and Housing and Urban Development sets the stage for seamless and comprehensive services and support for children, from birth through age 8. The inclusion of early learning in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act programs such as Race to the Top and Investing in Innovation are tangible opportunities to increase the quality and availability of early learning opportunities. And finally, the ESEA reauthorization represents an emerging opportunity to enhance collaboration between early learning and K-12 systems.

Collaboration between early childhood and K-12 is becoming more imperative as the delivery systems for both become more complex. As innovations such as online learning create alternatives for instruction, teacher preparation and professional development, assessments and data-driven decision-making, the potential to increase success and also complexity in both systems is likely to increase.

At the same time that options for providing quality learning experiences for P – 3 are expanding, public support also is on the rise. The collaborative potential of public education and early learning was revealed in the 2009 *Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll* on attitudes toward public education. The poll revealed strong support for early education – particularly in public schools. In fact, five out of ten Americans believe preschool programs should be housed in public schools, with parents even more supportive of the idea.

This is just one model for collaboration – there are many other options for establishing strong community partnerships and effective structures for P – 3 learning. Keys to enhance success regardless of structure include:



*Excellence and Equity  
in Public Education  
through School Board  
Leadership*

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**Funding and resources** – Investments in early learning and K-12 education are vital to the success of children and our nation. The historical independence of early learning and K-12 structures is reflected in the structure of funding streams and decision-making that at times leads to tension over finite resources. We have an opportunity to overcome this tension by increasing the overall federal investment in children and creating incentives for collaboration to minimize competition and maximize effectiveness, by creating a new grant program, supported by a separate funding stream, to help states and communities develop, expand, coordinate and enhance the quality and availability of voluntary preschool programs.

**Alignment** – Aligning curriculum, professional development, etc. in an inclusive manner can provide a consistent framework of services for children and improve pre-K to K-12 transitions.

**Standards** – Learning guidelines developed and supported locally to articulate what pre-k children should know and be able to do can likewise improve services for children and improve pre-K to K-12 transitions.

**Inter-agency collaboration** – Federal inter-agency efforts can be a model for states and communities to reduce duplication, eliminate gaps in service and develop strong partnerships to meet the needs of children.

In conclusion, school boards recognize the critical role that quality early childhood education programs play in helping to set a positive trajectory for student success. Since 2006 NSBA and its Center for Public Education have collaborated with the Pew Center on the States/Pre-K Now to engage school boards in support of high quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten education. We work in close partnership with state school boards associations to promote greater access to voluntary, high-quality pre-kindergarten programs in the belief that such programs will propel schools' efforts to raise student achievement and close achievement gaps.

This initiative to bridge P - 3 structures allows school districts to offer immense expertise and improve academic outcomes for young children while learning from early education providers and stakeholders how to meet the needs of children as they enter the system. The experience of school districts in establishing and implementing standards-based reforms and accountability systems can be invaluable as states develop standards for early learning programs, assess effectiveness, provide professional development and technical assistance in order to improve academic outcomes for young children.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide this statement. NSBA looks forward to an ongoing dialogue about early learning. Please call on us to assist in this vital work. Questions concerning our comments may be directed to Lucy Gettman, director, federal programs, at 703-838-6763; or by e-mail, [lgettman@nsba.org](mailto:lgettman@nsba.org).

Sincerely,



Michael A. Resnick  
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## Early Learning Listening Tour: Understanding P-3 Structures

Pre-KNow, Anya Malkov

April 23, 2010

Thank you for starting the Early Learning Listening Tour with today's panel of experts. Pre-K Now is a campaign of the Pew Center on the States. We work with advocates and policy makers to advance high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten for all three and four year olds. We appreciate this opportunity to provide our input and to be a resource to the Department in your efforts to improve early learning for children across the country. We want to be a partner as you work with Congress on the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

The goal of the administration's "blueprint" to Congress for rewriting ESEA is to encourage proven reform strategies based on data and research. The problem is the blueprint ignores the most rigorously evaluated and effective education reform of the last half-century: high-quality pre-kindergarten.

More than 50 years of research shows that high-quality pre-K is a proven strategy to improve children's cognitive, social and emotional skills; to increase their educational attainment; to close the achievement gap; and to enhance the quality and productivity of the workforce.

A recent analysis of 123 evaluations published in Columbia University's Teachers College Record found that pre-K programs "provide a real and enduring benefit to children," and that those benefits continue beyond the early elementary years.

To close achievement gaps and prepare students for success in school and college, the administration and Congress have a clear option: build funding and other incentives for pre-k into the nation's major education law.

We need policies that provide incentives and resources for teachers and other leaders in pre-k, kindergarten, first, second and third grades so that they can attend training meetings; plan lessons, track children's progress and align curricula. This means rewriting several sections of the law – including those related to professional development and funding formulae – to explicitly include pre-k children and teachers (including those who teach at community-based programs). It also means reframing how the law considers education. The outdated K-12 frame should be broadened, by expanding data collection and population calculations to incorporate children at age 3 and 4.

A focused, funded, pre-k through third grade approach would multiply the effects of other education reforms and it would also support the state leaders from both major parties who have grown their state pre-k programs in recent years.

The reality is, you cannot have a p-3 structure without the pre-k, and right now, despite impressive gains, and a commitment

by governors and state legislatures, fewer than 30 percent of the nation's three and four year olds are served by state-funded pre-k. State programs are under extraordinary pressure. The state leaders who have invested in pre-kindergarten need the Department of Education to become a federal partner with them in order to continue the growth of quality pre-k.

High-quality pre-k is the first step to education reform. It's an indispensable part of our nation's education system. Leaving pre-k behind in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act would mean missing an opportunity to improve our schools and prepare our nation's children for success in school, work and life.

**Ed Miller, Senior Researcher, Alliance for Childhood**

**Public comments delivered at “Listening and Learning About Early Learning: Understanding Preschool–Grade 3 Structures”**

**Friday, April 23, 2010**

**Lyndon Baines Johnson Building, 400 Maryland Ave. S.W., Washington, D.C.**

Dr. Jones, Dr. Lombardi, and distinguished colleagues:

My name is Ed Miller and I represent the Alliance for Childhood, a nonprofit research organization in College Park, Maryland. I am co-author with Joan Almon of the Alliance’s recent report titled *Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why Children Need to Play in School*.

I speak for a national community of researchers and practitioners devoted to young children’s learning, health, and overall well-being. Hundreds of us signed the Alliance’s recent statement of concern about the proposed K–3 common core standards. (The statement is posted online at [www.allianceforchildhood.org](http://www.allianceforchildhood.org).)

We applaud your efforts to promote understanding of early learning and preschool to grade 3 structures. Given the almost universal current structure of public schooling as a K–12 enterprise, the kindergarten year is a critical turning point. As kindergarten goes, so goes the child’s educational future. We must get kindergarten right—and right now we are failing.

The reasons for that failure are complex, but a big part of it is the pushing down into kindergarten of inappropriate curricular goals that are better suited to older children, and the use of inappropriate teaching methods that thwart young children’s natural curiosity, interests, and energy. In far too many kindergartens, the didactic drilling and testing of discrete skills in literacy and math have severely limited and even banished active hands-on learning and the play-based teaching techniques that are time-tested and most effective.

The kindergarten standards proposed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers last month will worsen this problem. They focus exclusively on discrete content knowledge and ignore the well documented need for an integrated approach to young children’s cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development.

We understand that these standards are intended as just one part of a larger reform that would include curricula and assessments. But the standards define the purpose—and thus the structure—of school. And the sheer number of standards being proposed, many with inappropriate goals for five-year-olds, will require long hours of instruction if children are to achieve them.

The proposed standards are not research-based, in spite of the NGA-CCSSO claims to the contrary. There is simply no definitive research showing that certain skills or bits of knowledge (such as counting to 100 or being able to read a certain number of words) if mastered in kindergarten will lead to later success in school. At best, these standards represent educated guesswork, not educational, cognitive, or developmental science.

At the same time, there is growing evidence that didactic kindergartens (and, increasingly, preschools) contribute to increased stress-related aggression and discipline problems, resulting in rising expulsion and retention rates. We know that child-initiated play, and especially social and dramatic play, develops self-regulation, empathy, and problem-solving skills. The disappearance of kindergarten play, documented in *Crisis in the Kindergarten*, is contributing to attention and behavior problems, while the lack of hands-on active learning and play (with blocks and crayons, for example) has led to severe deficits in hand skills and small-motor development.

These urgent and growing problems require immediate attention. We call for the withdrawal of the proposed K–3 core standards and the development instead of comprehensive guidelines for effective early care and teaching from birth to age eight. Such guidelines must recognize the right of every child to a healthy start in life and a developmentally appropriate education.



Better research is also desperately needed. We urge you to sponsor the kind of long-term comparative study that Germany did in the 1970s, comparing the outcomes of 50 so-called cognitive achievement kindergartens with 50 play-based kindergartens. By age 10, the children in the play-based programs excelled over the others in a host of domains, including literacy and mathematics. As a result, German kindergartens reversed direction and became play-based again.

Play, learning, and creativity are inextricably connected, not just in early childhood but throughout human development. School structures that thwart play endanger our children and our future as a vibrant, healthy, and free society.



**Remarks of the First Five Years Fund  
Catherine Hildum  
U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services  
Listening And Learning Tour On Early Childhood Education  
Washington, DC  
April 23, 2010**

Understanding Pre-Kindergarten to Third Grade Structures

Thank you to the Department of Education (ED) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for hosting these listening and learning sessions and especially to Jacqueline Jones and Joan Lombardi. We appreciate your determined collaboration that has moved important child development and education conversations forward to help ensure that all students are college and career ready.

My name is Catherine Hildum and I am speaking today on behalf of the First Five Years Fund. The goal of the First Five Years Fund (FFYF) is to ensure that the interests of at-risk children from birth to age five are included in policy and funding decisions, and to attract substantial additional public/private sector investment. Seven influential philanthropies joined together to support the First Five Years Fund, recognizing the high return on investment and essential role of early childhood development to our nation's future. My remarks will be brief.

We are heartened by yesterday's hearing in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee on "The Needs of the Whole Student," and the discussion among Senators and witnesses about education beginning at birth. It is imperative to take advantage of the opportunities now – ESEA reauthorization, increased investment in quality Child Care and Head Start, Early Learning Challenge Fund -- to connect early childhood education to K-12 education and build a seamless continuum of learning for all students starting at the earliest possible moment.

We appreciate the Administration's recognition that learning begins at birth and this session focusing on coordinated structures for pre-kindergarten and the early elementary grades. The achievement gap is evident before age three, so efforts to reduce it must begin long before a child enters school. In fact, research clearly shows the positive outcomes in school and in life attributed to focusing on a child's development in the critical first three years. I will not repeat statistics and studies that you know well and have been referenced at similar forums. Instead, I will share examples of partnerships whose structures could inform federal policy. The Total Learning Initiative in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and the Educare model stand out as two distinct examples of well-implemented and highly effective birth to third grade programs/partnerships.

Total Learning Initiative

The Total Learning Initiative was developed to improve educational and life outcomes for children in Bridgeport, Connecticut, the largest city with the highest concentration of poverty in the state. "The Total Learning utilizes a "whole child" approach to addressing the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers. It is a comprehensive model of educational and social support for children from birth to age nine and their families. The curriculum for the classroom incorporates art and music into the core subjects. Intensive family supports outside the classroom foster positive development and help boost parent involvement and student achievement.

The Total Learning Initiative is a collaboration of the community action agency, local board of education, Head Start, art and music education groups, mental health providers and researchers.

Teachers at all levels and parents receive extensive training on the curriculum which is continuously evaluated and improved. Research indicates positive outcomes for Total Learning children on reading assessments as compared to their peers who are not part of the Total Learning curriculum.

### Educare

Educare programs provide full-day, full-year high-quality services for at-risk children from birth to age five. They are located purposefully adjacent to or on the site of an elementary school. By design, that school becomes an important partner in creating continuity for the children's learning. There are currently 10 Educare centers operating across the country, in addition to two currently under construction and the possibility of seven additional centers in the near future. One example of collaboration is the Center for Excellence/Educare of Miami providing training for public school teachers to build the curriculum bridge from Educare to K-3.

Educare centers' operations are funded through a combination of federal Head Start, Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Title I dollars (in some cases), state and local school funding, parent co-pays and private sector support. Children and their families are supported from birth through the preschool years and through the early grades in the partner elementary school. The first Educare Center in Chicago has been subject of an intensive study to build the data links between the first five years and elementary school. Preliminary findings from the first cohort of 124 children who began at the Chicago Educare and finished third grade in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) indicate continued success for Educare children. Not one of the children in this cohort has been newly referred for special education services. Educare children are also less likely than the Chicago Public Schools comparison children to perform in the lowest quartile or "Academic Warning" level in reading and math on third grade state tests.

Total Learning and Educare serve the most disadvantaged children and families and could be models for communities across the nation. The important lesson from these examples is that effective birth to third grade structures are possible through partnerships among early childhood providers, schools, government at all levels, parents and the community.

Based on these examples and other successful partnerships, the First Five Years Fund advocates that meaningful changes in ESEA can help more children experience success in school if we make explicit and important connections between their early learning experiences and their start to K-12. FFYF has submitted the following recommendations for ESEA reauthorization:

Improve data and reporting requirements about early learning in Title I.

Require early learning as part of school improvement planning.

Provide Title I funds specifically targeted to early learning that begins at birth.

Support cross-fertilization of best practices between early childhood and K-12, through teacher preparation, mentoring and induction, and ongoing professional development.

Consolidate multiple and overlapping federal data requirements by requiring states to implement unified early childhood data systems connected to state longitudinal data systems on a reasonable but aggressive timeline.

Ensure that state K-12 standards provide an appropriate definition of "school readiness."

Require birth-to-eight planning in elementary schools receiving school improvement funds, and the use of school improvement funds to improve school readiness.

Require elementary schools to better connect with early learning as part of their community involvement strategies.



The First Five Years Fund strongly supports the ongoing work of the two federal agencies to consider child development and education policy comprehensively. We urge increased investment in Head Start and CCDBG -- the core early childhood programs administered by HHS. In addition, we support the creation of an Early Learning Challenge Fund to improve quality, access and coordination of programs for children and their families. The First Five Years Fund looks forward to the results of your listening tour across the country.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.



**AMERICAN  
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-  
HEARING  
ASSOCIATION**

**Oral Statement**

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**The Early Learning Listening Tour**

**Understanding P-3 Structures**

**April 23, 2010**

**Washington, DC**

My name is Deborah Adamczyk and I am the Director of School Services for the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), the professional, scientific and credentialing association of over 140,000 speech-language pathologists, audiologists and speech, language and hearing scientists.

Effective communication skills are essential not only for academic achievement, but also for social success and life time engagement in the community. These skills are directly linked to success in major life activities- thinking, learning, literacy, problem solving and getting along with others. Spoken language provides the foundation for the development of reading and writing.

SLPs are often the first professionals to identify the root cause of reading and writing problems through a child's difficulty with spoken language. SLPS help children to build the literacy skills they need to succeed in school and in life.

The [National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study](#) revealed that at least 41% of children entering early intervention programs have a communication disorder. Children with communication disorders frequently do not perform at grade level. They may have difficulty understanding and expressing language, struggle with reading and writing, misunderstand social cues, demonstrate poor reasoning and judgment and have difficulty expressing their wants and needs. Children who struggle to communicate may manifest this frustration as behavior problems. Improving their communication skills can reduce their frustration and accompanying behavior problems.

Early identification and intervention can ameliorate some of the negative effects of early communication problems. The earlier and more comprehensively the speech language disorder is identified and treated, the more successful outcomes are realized. In addition to those children who are diagnosed with a speech and or language disorder, SLPs play a role in



helping other children who may simply be demonstrating a weakness or delay in the areas of communication and or literacy.

SLPs have extensive education and experience recognizing and understanding differences in typical language development and disorders. This knowledge base, combined with skill in using diagnostic-prescriptive and evidenced based practices for assessment, intervention and progress monitoring is especially valuable in the school setting. As students develop appropriate communication skills, they are better equipped to think creatively and solve society's challenging and complex problems. In short, their journey to becoming contributing citizens starts in their early childhood years.

It had been my privilege to work in the public school systems in Pennsylvania for much of my professional life. I can tell you that I was fortunate to observe the very positive changes that occurred in the lives of children and their families. It was thrilling to watch children grow from struggling communicators who suffered daily to understand the world around them and communicate their wants and needs to happier, healthier youngsters who integrated more successfully into their world as they acquired the ability to communicate effectively.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Involve SLPs in the provision of services to children in the general education setting (under ESEA), including pre-referral and consultative services. These services are in addition to SLP's more traditional role in the provision of special education and related services (under IDEA).

SLPs have a critical role to play in enhancing the speech and language skills of all children. SLPs are involved in the following ways:

- Provide information about developmental milestones so that families and teachers know what to expect at each grade. They help families and teachers understand the

distinction between language disorders and language differences for children who speak more than one language.

- Assist teachers in general education classrooms by working with them to build spoken and written language skills that are essential for literacy and academic learning. The implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) models is increasing across grades in school districts throughout the country. SLPs should be involved in this multi-tiered instruction to improve student performance, prevent learning and behavior problems, and more accurately identify those students who may be eligible for special education services.
- Help teams understand the link between spoken and written language, demonstrate how language weaknesses affect literacy, and plan goals and strategies that address these weaknesses.
- Assess and evaluate children with speech and language problems using a variety of standardized and nonstandardized assessment tools.
- As part of a team, SLPs design, implement, and evaluate intervention programs for those students diagnosed with speech and language disorders.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

## Early Learning Listening Tour - Understanding P-3 Structures

Statement by  
Rima Shore, Ph.D.

Adelaide Weismann Chair in Educational Leadership  
Bank Street College of Education  
April 23, 2010

This morning Ruby Takanishi remarked that effective PreK-3rd grade education isn't rocket science, and I agree. It is actually harder than rocket science — or so we might conclude, based on our nation's impressive ability to launch adults into orbit and our less impressive record of launching young children into the trajectories we want for them.

That's why I want to focus on leadership preparation.

A dozen years ago, at a time when early childhood was moving higher on the nation's education agenda, the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative asked policy analyst Anne Mitchell and me to help them map out next steps for advancing quality in early care and education.

Anne and I spoke with more than 70 leaders in the field. We asked: what needs to happen now to move the early childhood agenda? We were sure we'd hear about promising programs and strategies for scaling them up.

We were wrong. With surprising unanimity, our informants said that the most urgent need was to develop leaders who deeply understand early childhood development and learning and can make a powerful case for increased public investment in the well-being and education of young children.

Since that time, the field has benefited from new leaders (including many who are in this room or attending the webinar) who have created innovative organizations, coalitions and approaches. Despite this progress, systematic leadership development efforts remain an urgent priority for the field.

As Sharon Lynn Kagan has pointed out, this is "a precarious time for American early childhood education. Expectations and investments are soaring now as never before in the nation's history" (Kagan, 2009, p. 24). Yet, as a nation, we have no clear answers to the pressing question of how to achieve overall quality. The problem, she writes, "is that the research and practices are all there for us in little pieces" (Kagan, 2009, p. 24). In other words, researchers have given us many pieces of the puzzle, but not the picture on the box.

We at Bank Street are calling for new investments in leadership preparation geared to the specific challenges of putting the pieces together to create coherent, aligned, powerful, early childhood programs rooted in today's best understandings of early childhood development and learning.

Bank Street's Graduate School has long been committed to preparing leaders for early childhood programs as well as for K-12 schools. Our Early Childhood Leadership program, which leads to New York State School Building Leader certification, focuses intensively on leading learning for children from birth through grade 3.

For many years, our Early Childhood Leadership Program remained a rarity. Most leadership preparation programs focus on graduating K-12 administrators, and a focus on early childhood learning has not traditionally been considered especially relevant for principals and superintendents.

These days we have a bit more company. We'd like to see the field get more crowded! Let me tell you why.

**First, the field needs leaders who are knowledgeable consumers and producers of early childhood research.**

Today, more is known than ever before about what kids need and how they learn in the years from birth through third grade. These insights come from studies in many fields, such as developmental psychology, neuroscience, cognitive science and economics, as well as from educational research, including observational studies. And we are quickly learning more about effective PreK-3rd grade approaches.

But our nation's research investments will only pay off if we have leaders and advocates who are able to interpret, synthesize, and sometimes challenge or extend findings; think through their implications; explain them to others; and take appropriate action.

We need district leaders who can rally support for early childhood investments and champion effective approaches, including aligned educational strategies and resources across grades.

We need center directors and school leaders who know what they are looking for when they walk into a PreK or primary classroom and who can help teachers across the PreK-3rd grade continuum strengthen and align their practices and curricula.

Just as importantly, we need teacher leaders who can work with colleagues to think through, model, and strengthen research-based strategies that are geared to the specific needs and strengths of their kids and their school communities.

A capacity to use, critique, and extend research matters because as Kagan noted, the research is in pieces and all too often, decision-makers respond to confusing or fragmentary data with ill-conceived policies and practices, with adverse consequences for children and families. In many cases, faulty logic leads to misguided policy, such as pushing academic seatwork down to the preschool and kindergarten years and leaving little time for play.

### **Second, we need leaders who get the big picture.**

Getting the big picture means having a grasp of all of the PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> components that we heard about from this morning's panelists:

- Engaging, research-based curricula and instructional strategies that foster growth across the developmental spectrum;
- Effective approaches to partnering with parents and communities;
- Appropriate strategies for gauging children's progress — and let's acknowledge that the questions around PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> assessment are so thorny that the National Task Force on Early Childhood Accountability found it difficult to reach consensus on some key dimensions of their subject;
- Mixed delivery systems that create enormous complexity in the realms of regulation, funding, and system-building;
- The many transitions that children and families experience as they move from one setting to another, one level of schooling to another, one funding stream or eligibility status to another.
- The very difficult work of aligning all of an organization's messages, routines, and resources to support early learning.

### **So we need leaders who get the big picture, but, third, we also need leaders who get the "small" picture.**

A wide-angle systems perspective is indispensable, but so is the close-up view, and leaders must be skilled in using multiple lenses. Leaders need to help teachers recognize and respond to children's individual differences within a developmental continuum and within the context of cultural diversity. A grasp of developmental variation goes hand-in-hand with an understanding of early intervention.

The challenges are immense, but we believe that all leaders can learn — if they have opportunities to gain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to implement and sustain high quality PreK-3rd grade education.

One final point: Given the complexity of the tasks, and the need for multi-disciplinary, evidence-based approaches, higher education is uniquely positioned to provide this preparation. Today, alternative pathways to teacher and leader development are gaining political traction. At Bank Street, we recognize that many organizations and professionals can contribute to leadership development. But as we meet the educational and political challenges of coming years, let's be sure the next generation of leaders benefits from the kinds of focused inquiry, instruction, and advisement that institutions of higher education offer.

# American Association of Christian Schools

*A National Voice Helping You Educate for Eternity*



## AACS Comments for Early Childhood Listening and Learning Tour

April 23, 2010

Maureen Wiebe, AACS Legislative Director

My name is Maureen Wiebe and I work as the Legislative Director for the American Association of Christian Schools. First, I would like to say thank you to Jacqueline Jones from the Department of Education and Joan Lombardi from the Department of Health and Human Services for organizing the forum today to discuss the early education initiatives of the Administration and for giving the opportunity to make public comments.

The American Association of Christian Schools is a national organization with just over 800 schools nationwide. Many of these schools offer early education opportunities in both urban and rural areas of the country, meeting the needs of families ranging from low- to middle- to high-income. The majority of these schools offer education for grades pre-k through 12, providing for a seamless transition for a child's educational experience. These schools provide excellent programs because of their commitment to supporting parents in their vital role as the primary caregivers of their children, and their commitment to providing quality care and education. Practically, these schools offer small classes, low teacher-student ratio, and a variety of educational opportunities. To aid these schools, the AACS offers an accreditation program specifically for pre-K schools that demonstrate excellence in programs, teacher qualifications, curriculum, and facilities.

We join the rest of the non-public community in our strong interest in the area of early education as non-public early pre-school programs make up the majority of existing early education programs. Thankfully, these programs have enjoyed great success in preparing children for elementary school, which then leads to success in high school and college. I want to share with you two key factors which we believe are vital to this success.

First is a recognition of the vital role that parents play in the education of young children, beginning at birth. As Gail Connelly mentioned in her opening statements today, her young grandson is thriving due to, first of all, the love of his parents, his grandparents, and other family members. Without question, quality parenting is the best predictor of a child's future success and development emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually. Any early education that a child receives beyond the home can serve to enhance a child's experiences but should never supplant the parents' role in providing the education and direction for these young children. The commitment to support parents and work with them in the education of their young children is a key factor to the success of the non-public pre-school centers and schools which provide these early education opportunities.

The second key component to their success is the autonomy that the non-public school community enjoys. The autonomy of a non-public school allows them to provide a continuance of education from pre-school to elementary school to high school, preparing their students to be college-ready. This seamless transition from grade to grade allows the teachers to work together and collaborate on the best methods to meet the needs of each child as the child progresses to each new level. It is not unusual for a student to graduate from high school having attended the same school since his pre-K years, and then go on to enjoy success at college.

This autonomy also aids the non-public school in employing highly qualified teachers as the principals have the authority and autonomy to hire the best teachers that align with the mission and vision of the school. This serves to ensure that the teachers and administration of the school have the same strong commitment to the education of the children. In turn, the teachers have the flexibility to employ the best educational methods and experiences that will meet the various learning modes presented by each individual student. The professional development for the teachers is also enhanced as they are given the opportunity to collaborate

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on the best methods with other experts in various fields, and also connect with a network of other teachers in similar educational environments.

These two key factors – recognition of parental authority and autonomy of the school – are the key components to the success of the education offered at the non-public early learning programs.

In consideration of the large number of non-public schools that are providing excellent education and opportunities for so many young children, we believe that the best early education policy is one that allows for the continuance of the autonomy of non-public schools and also recognizes the primary role and responsibility of parents in the early education of children.



## **Recommendations for the Early Learning Listening Tour - Understanding P-3 Structures**

***Apr 23, 2010***

Greetings and thanks to Dr. Jones and Dr. Lombardi:

On behalf of the New America Foundation's Early Education Initiative, I'm Maggie Severns. I'd like to thank you for requesting our input-- It is exciting to see the Department of Education convening this meeting on what we consider an extremely important subject. In light of the pending reauthorization of ESEA, these issues could not be more timely.

At New America, we believe we must transform our public education system to reflect the latest research on the impact of high-quality learning environments for children in their early years. As you know, our latest paper, *A Next Social Contract for the Primary Years of Education*, envisions a better system that starts public education at age 3, eliminates the divide between a child's early years and his or her K-12 and college experiences, and improves the early grades of elementary school.

Currently, instead of a seamless stream of educational opportunities, young children and their families veer between disconnected services: What should be a well-aligned conduit that guides children from birth to third grade (when foundational skills are formed), is instead fragmented and poorly formed for the diverse needs of young children. This fragmented educational pipeline is inefficient, and it's costing us -- in the lost opportunity to improve math and reading scores for America's students, in the human capital we lose when a child fails to graduate from high school or college and enters the workforce unprepared, and in the potential for these individuals to have a high quality of life.

Here are some of our recommendations for building structures that will align and improve the early years of education for all children:

- ***Principals and preschool directors must collaborate and communicate.*** Today, directors operating schools for 3 and 4-year-olds have no route for communicating with those in schools serving children from age 5 up. Here, we see an area in distinct need of structure: a lack of communication between these two administrative bodies because of an arbitrary age divide represents a missed opportunity for understanding how children develop over time. By partnering with early childhood programs to lay the foundation for later learning, school districts can take critical steps to help disadvantaged children make smoother transitions to school-based settings.
- Beyond these lines of communication, we need **data systems** that extend up from the early years—starting at age 3, or if possible, at birth – and integrate with those of more formal school environments. Collecting longitudinal data on students provides valuable insight into how and why learning patterns develop, and sharing that data enables teachers and administrators to better understand how to tailor their instruction and programs to make a difference.
- Teachers from pre-kindergarten through third grade should be receiving **continuous and shared professional development** opportunities. Programs should recognize the need for all teachers in pre-k through third grades to (1) gain knowledge of child development based on current science about children’s needs and their capacities for learning, and (2) see themselves as part of a professional learning community that extends across grades vertically.
- **Community providers can and should play a role** in helping to develop PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> structures. If we create incentives to incorporate community-based Pre-K providers into our public school system—and expect higher standards and public accountability in exchange— the benefits will be twofold: First, the public system will be able to serve a larger population of students. Second, community-based providers often serve as the gateway for parents to a world of formal learning environments for their children. By connecting with community-based providers, the public system will be able to create that invaluable pipeline: a public education system that is seamless from the moment a child enters his first preschool classroom to when he or she graduates from high school. Enfranchising community providers will help make this possible.
- Finally, **consider policies that support a PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> grade teaching credential.** Credentials that pretend a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher is adept at teaching 4- and 5-year olds—and vice versa— aren’t doing teachers or their students any favors. A PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> credential would raise standards for pre-K teachers and strengthen early elementary teachers’ knowledge and skills to work with young children.

We look forward to seeing how the Department of Education seizes the opportunity for PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> reform. Thank you for your consideration.



**TESTIMONY OF BEN ALLEN, PH.D.**  
**PUBLIC POLICY AND RESEARCH DIRECTOR**  
**NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION**

**LISTENING AND LEARNING SESSION ABOUT EARLY LEARNING: UNDERSTANDING P-3  
STRUCTURES**

April 23, 2010

Good afternoon, Drs. Joan Lombardi and Jacqueline Jones. I am Ben Allen, the Public Policy and Research Director at the National Head Start Association (NHSA). Thank you for providing the National Head Start Association with an opportunity to share our perspective regarding the development of P-3 structures. I applaud both of you for your work in enhancing collaboration between the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is expected that your work will help Head Start and Early Head Start programs supply a range of educational, health, nutrition, and family support services by improving the coordination and collaboration of these programs with local educational agencies and community partners.

I would also like to salute your four main panelists: Gail Connelly, Executive Director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals; Deborah Leong, Professor of Psychology at the Metropolitan State College of Denver; Ruby Takanishi, President of the Foundation for Child Development; and Jerry Weast, Superintendent of the Montgomery County Public Schools. Each of them has recognized directly or indirectly the value of Head Start programs. In her testimony, Gail Connelly mentioned that her association endorsed the professional standards developed by Head Start. Deborah Leong spoke about the importance of approaches to learning in fostering a child's learning. Approaches to learning is one of eight developmental domains in the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework. Jerry Weast talked about the tremendous progress his school district has made in improving children's academic performance, and Head Start programs have contributed to that academic progress by collaborating with his school district. Finally, Ruby Takanishi discussed a number of places where the P-3 model has been implemented successfully. One of these places is the Bremerton School District in Washington State which I will discuss shortly.

The National Head Start Association (NHSA) is a national nonprofit membership association representing more

than 200,000 Head Start teachers, parents, directors, educational coordinators, family support and other staff, who work with more than 1 million at-risk children from birth to age 5 who are in Head Start/Early Head Start programs. NHSA's commitment is to ensure that at-risk children and their families receive an opportunity for quality early childhood experiences from birth to grade 3. The hallmark elements of Head Start are its 1) whole child approach to learning, 2) emphasis on parental involvement and engagement, and 3) a range of educational, health, nutrition, and family support services. These elements must be carried forth into kindergarten and beyond if the head start on readiness is to be maintained.

One of the promising places where these elements have been put into action in a seamless way from pre-k to third grade, is in the Bremerton School District. Through their collaboration with preschools and elementary schools, Head Start programs have played a leadership role in creating and implementing the pre-k through third grade experience in the Bremerton School District. The Bremerton School District provides full-day kindergarten and aligned curriculum from Head Start through third grade. As a result of its innovative approach, the quality of instruction has increased, and there have been significant gains in student achievement. National experts have recognized the school district for its innovative early childhood education approach and its cohesive pre-k to third grade system.

The Bremerton School District follows the Lighthouse Project model. The Lighthouse Project is a teaching and educational institute for other school districts in Washington State who want to build pre-k to third grade systems. Twenty-six individual schools or districts have participated in the Lighthouse Project. For more information about the Bremerton School District model, see the attached summary supplied by Jill Brenner with the Kitsap Community Resources Early Learning and Family Services in Bremerton, Washington.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak.

## **A Pre-K to 3rd Grade Success Story in Bremerton, Washington**

**By Jill Brenner**

"Six years ago, the Bremerton School District forged a community-wide plan to increase kindergarten readiness and literacy. Leaders are intentionally aligning up, down and across systems so that all children enter 3rd grade at reading level. Today, the district is nationally recognized for its leadership in early childhood education, connecting preschool to full-day kindergarten and beyond. What began as a collaboration between Head Start programs, preschools and child care providers has matured into a cohesive early learning system. Bremerton boasts free full-day kindergarten, aligned curriculum through 3rd grade and dedicated professional development that supports teacher implementation. The district also works hard to cultivate new partnerships, engage community members, and utilize current research and data to drive the process. The result is significant gains in student achievement and increased quality of instruction. For example, in 2009, 66 percent of Bremerton kindergarten students entered school knowing their letters—up from just 4 percent in 2001." – Foundation for Child Development

What this looks like in practice for Pre-school:

- Monthly leadership meetings of childcare and pre-school Directors to discuss and evaluate curriculum, training, and upcoming events. This group is called the Early Child Care and Education (ECCE) group and consists of 25 community providers at this time.
- Monthly professional development for all pre-school staff – Head Start, local child care providers, and faith based partners.
- Monthly "Learning Walks" across grade levels to see what the next transition will be and where children are coming from.
- Annual open house each fall to invite new partners and overview the curriculum mode.
- A dedicated Teacher on Special Assignment, from the District, who provides training and on site technical assistance to all partner providers.
- A consistent literacy curriculum used by all early learning partners and aligned with school curriculum for the next grades.
- Mid year assessment of pre-school aged children that provides feedback to Teacher allowing for adjustment of practice for skills that need a little more attention around Kindergarten readiness.
- Annual assessment of children entering Kindergarten from partnering pre-schools with a feedback loop to the pre-school providers. This allows for continuous improvement on the early learning side of services.
- A pre-school experience that is followed up by full day kindergarten to ensure gains in knowledge vs. regression of what has been learned.
- A local model of one school campus serving children from 8 weeks of age until 8 years old. The potential for a child in this model is continually smooth transition in a community school – they are comfortable with their environment, know the adults in their world (from teachers to principal, etc), and have essentially grown up on this campus.

What this looks like in practice for Schools/children K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade:

- Full day kindergarten children begin with experiences and curriculum they are already familiar with.

- Kindergarten Teachers adjust practices to meet the skill level of incoming children. This practice of adjustment trickles up the line from K to 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- The school district has provided instructional coaching to K-3<sup>rd</sup> teachers to assist with changing practices.
- Monthly “Learning Walks” across grade levels to see what the next transition will be and where children are coming from.
- The Lighthouse Project which is a teaching and learning institute for other school districts within the state of WA who wish to build Pre-k to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade systems. Bremerton School Districts trains on this model and helps others replicate or develop their own models of Pre-k to 3<sup>rd</sup>. There have been 26 individual schools or districts who have participated in this project either through training, visitation, or general interest.